Medicare Savings Program Partners' Newsletter Summer 2003

Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals- Medicaid

IN THIS ISSUE

Pages 2-4
MSP Partners' Meetings

Page 5
MSP Conference

Page 6
C.A.B.L.E. is
Outstanding MSP
Partner and Monroe
Region Boasts an
Outstanding
Outreach Team

Page 8 Senior Olympics in Alexandria Region

Page 10
Focus Groups, QI-1
Program and Medicare
Prescription Drug
Coverage

Page 11
Acadiana Outreach Events



MSP Partners' Meetings held Across the State

MSP Partners across the state attended the First Annual MSP Partners' Meeting in their area to learn more about Louisiana's effort to educate and raise awareness about the Medicare Savings Program. In July 2002 the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals a 36 month grant in support of its participation in the Foundation's program, State Solutions: An Initiative to Improve Enrollment in Medicare Savings Programs. The Medicare Savings Program is available to Louisianians on Medicare and saves those who qualify over \$700 a year in Medicare premiums alone.

The meetings provided an opportunity to express our appreciation to partners for their contribution to raising awareness about the programs and helping many Louisianians enroll. Our partners have a common interest in helping those in need. They enjoyed meeting one another and exchanging information about the services they provide. Refreshments were served and door prizes were given away. MSP Partners' Meetings will be held again in the spring of 2004.



Above: Thibodaux Region MSP Partners' Meeting, May 29, 2003, Nicholls State University Century Room.

Thibodaux Region MSP Partners' Meeting

Thibodaux Region held their MSP Partners' Meeting on May 29, 2003, at Nicholls State University Century Room.



Above: A general overview of MSP was presented at the **Thibodaux Region MSP Partners' Meeting.**

Below: Thibodaux Region MSP Outreach Team Left to right: Lee Rodrigue, Nell Ledet, Angela English, and Theresa Fussell.



Alexandria Region MSP Partners' Meeting

The **Alexandria Region MSP Partners' Meeting** was held on May 22, 2003, in the VR Conference Room in the State Office Building in Alexandria, Louisiana.



Above: Alexandria Region MSP Outreach Team Left to right: Edward Fowler, Caroline Edwards, Patti Larney and Linda Henry. Below: MSP Partners network during the refreshment break at the **Alexandria Region MSP Partners' Meeting.**



Lafayette Region MSP Partners' Meetings

Lafayette Region held MSP Partners' Meetings in each of its parishes:

Evangeline Parish Medicaid Office – April 23, 2003; St. Landry Parish Medicaid Office - April 30, 2003; Vermilion Parish Medicaid Office - May 7, 2003; Iberia Parish Medicaid Office - May 14,

2003; Acadia Parish Medicaid Office - May 21, 2003; Lafayette Parish Medicaid Office- May 28,

2003; and St. Martin Parish Medicaid Office – May 29, 2003.



Above: Registration for MSP Partners' Meeting in St. Landry Parish.



Above: **Germaine Breaux** makes a MSP Presentation.



Above: Lafayette Region
MSP Outreach Team-Germaine Breaux, Priscilla
Brunet and Debra Bourque.
(Kathy Reed, not shown.)

Monroe Region MSP Partners' Meeting

Monroe Region's MSP Partners' Meeting was held on May 12, 2003, at the Ouachita Parish Council on Aging.





Above: **Monroe Region MSP Partners** learn more about the Medicare Savings Program.

Above: **Julie Thompson** (center) and **Rita Gibson** (right) assist a MSP Partner during registration.

Mandeville Region MSP Partners' Meeting

Mandeville Region conducted their MSP Partners' Meeting on May 22, 2003, at the Tangipahoa Parish Medicaid Office Conference Room.



Above: Mandeville MSP Outreach Team
Front row left to right: Pat Stewart,
Faye Williams and Myrtis Isadore
Back row left to right:

Back row left to right:

Margaret Whited and Samantha
Gibson. (Pat Dixon, not shown).



Above: Door prize winners. Below: **MSP Partners** receive an update about MSP Outreach activities.



First year of State Solutions Grant is a Success

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals was awarded a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, State Solutions: An Initiative to Improve Enrollment in Medicare Savings Programs in July 2002.

From July 2002 through June 2003, Medicaid staff throughout the state collectively spent over 9,000 hours educating and raising awareness about MSP. MSP Outreach activities included attending health fairs and festivals, live presentations, recruiting and training MSP Partners, and one-on-one assistance to potential eligibles. The massive

outreach effort paid off. Enrollment in MSP has increased. By working together, Medicaid staff and our MSP Partners helped over 6,900 Louisianians enroll in MSP and save over \$700 per year in Medicare premiums since the project began.

The time and energy Medicaid staff and our MSP Partners have devoted to this project clearly shows that they deeply care about helping Louisiana's seniors and people with disabilities. Thank you, MSP Partners, for helping so many Louisianians on Medicare enroll

Louisiana holds 1st Annual MSP Conference

MSP Outreach Teams from Louisiana's nine Medicaid Regions and State Office met in New Orleans on April 1-3, 2003, to share their MSP Outreach successes and lessons learned. Dr. Susan Reinhard, State Solutions National Program Office Director, and Marlene Verniero, State Solutions Deputy Director, were special guests.

Workshops were conducted by Laverne Saulny, Assistant to US Senator Landrieu; Dr. Melissa Flournoy, LANO President and CEO: Bob Johannessen, Director ofDHH Bureau ofCommunications and Inquiry Services; Ron Blereau of the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs; and Dr. C. Turner Steckline, University of Monroe Associate Professor.



Above: **Dr. Melissa Flournoy**, LANO President and CEO, provided valuable information about Challenges of Coalitions, Collaborations and Community Outreach."



Above: **Dr. Susan Reinhard**, State Solutions National Program Office Director, kicked off the conference with an "Overview of State Solutions."



Above: Laverne Saulny, Assistant to US Senator Mary Landrieu, spoke about "Partnering with Faith-Based Organizations."



Left: **Ruth Kennedy,** Deputy Medicaid Director, addressed "Maintaining Momentum."

Right: **Donna Dedon**, Medicaid Eligibility Section Chief, talked about "MSP System Progress."



Working with our MSP Partners to Increase Awareness

About the Medicare Savings Program

Communities Acting to Benefit Louisiana's Elderly (C.A.B.L.E.) has proven to be a very important MSP Partner for Monroe Region. This networking organization was established in 1996 as an initiative from the Governor's Office of

Elderly Affairs. The purpose of the initiative is that local communities should be held accountable for seniors and aging issues. It is a voluntary organization made up of approximately 80 individuals working in various senior environments. The organization meets monthly and works by project committees to accomplish its mission. Pat Simpson and Sue Scott, Monroe Region MSP team leaders, are members of the organization. Being a member of C.A.B.L.E. has helped Monroe Region reach many elderly and disabled individuals in Northeast Louisiana and enroll them in the Medicare Savings Program.



Above: C.A.B.L.E. members- Kitty DeCree, Treasurer; Betty Cummings, Member; Kelly Farmer, President; and Lea Jones, Vice President

Monroe Region Boasts an OUTSTANDING MSP Outreach Team

Due to the large geographic area of Monroe Region, each of the 12 parishes in the Region has a person responsible for MSP Outreach in their parish. The success of Monroe Region's outreach for



MSP and LaCHIP is attributed to all of the wonderful ladies pictured above.

MSP Activities in Monroe Region



Pat Simpson, Sonya Hillman and Sue Scott share information about Monroe Region's MSP Outreach activities at the April 2003 MSP State Conference in New Orleans.



Left to right: MSP Outreach Team, Julie Thompson, Sonya Hillman, Sue Scott and Pat Simpson take a break at the New Orleans MSP Conference.



Monroe Region held a **Focus Group Meeting** on May 14, 2003, to obtain input from consumers about how to simplify and streamline the MSP application form.



Monroe Region Medicaid staff provided one-on-one assistance during the May 14th Focus Group Meeting.



Left to right: **Pat Simpson**, Monroe Region MSP Outreach Team member; **Kelly Farmer**, Senior Program Director of the Food Bank of Northeast Louisiana; and **Becky McCain**, Ouachita Parish Medicaid Area Manager. **Monroe Region employees** donated \$200 to the food bank. This contribution will adopt two seniors for 12 months and provide them with a 50 pound box of food each of the 12 months.

MSP and Senior Olympics in Alexandria Region

By Edward Fowler

"Someone should tell us right at the start that we are all dying. Then we would be more inclined to live life to the limit every minute of every day."

-Michael Landon



The Senior Olympics is an

annual event that gives seniors the opportunity to invest themselves socially and competitively. Alexandria Region Medicaid staff saw the 2003 Senior Olympics as the perfect chance to end the MSP Outreach year with a BANG. Events were held in Rapides Parish throughout the last two weeks in April, ranging from the 1500 meter dash to everyone's favorite, baking. During the two weeks of the Olympics, Medicaid volunteers coordinated events for four days dedicated to



golf, shuffleboard, outdoor track and field, and the final day, a combination of indoor and outdoor sports and activities. The last day's competition ended with a team effort in which four teams of seniors competed in group games. Track and field participants included 91 and 93 year old javelin and shot-put throwers (and he still flies his own plane). This year's Olympics Ceremony ended with an awards banquet at the Alexandria VFW, attended by the King himself, Elvis Presley.

Seventeen BHSF employees clocked 204 total MSP hours during the two weeks of the Senior Olympics. The Medicare Savings Program was a registered sponsor; however, unlike most MSP events, MSP application distribution was not the primary focus. Building rapport and program

recognition within the community were the major objectives of participation.

The Olympics is a program enhancing life and health for all participants, even volunteers. Alexandria Region challenges all MSP Partners and Medicaid staff to get involved with local Senior Citizens' Centers and Senior Olympics to strengthen ties to the community.



Above: Alexandria Region Medicaid staff volunteers.



A 93 year young man participated in the discus, shot put, and javelin events.



Alexandria Medicaid staff take a break.



Lisa Dauzat and **Sybil Guilbeau** determine who will win the baking event.



Edward Fowler, Catherine Inks, and Lester Turner man the MSP Outreach table.



Lester Turner and **Billie Flynn** assist with the dart event, one of the most popular events.



Patsy Desoto judges the quilting event.

Medicaid Regions Conduct Focus Group Meetings

Focus Group Meetings were held statewide to obtain input from consumers. Each of the Medicaid Regions invited nine or more consumers to review the MSP application form and tell how to make the application form and application process more "user friendly."

The Lake Charles Region held a Focus Group meeting on May 2, 2003, in the Beauregard Parish Medicaid office. They were fortunate to have ten eager participants as one of their scheduled participants brought a spouse. The group came from various education/employment backgrounds resulting in a good sampling with good feedback.

The participants gave excellent suggestions for simplifying the MSP application form. They also enjoyed the

refreshments, socializing, and most of all---the MSP promotional items.



Kaiser Provides Report on Legislation for Pending Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

"As Congress continues to debate a Medicare prescription drug proposal, the public, media and policy makers are looking at the details of each bill and how current and future Medicare beneficiaries will be affected. A new resource from the Kaiser Foundation provides information in assessing the potential effects of the House and Senate bills. Prescription Drug Coverage for Medicare Beneficiaries: A Side-by-Side Comparison of Selected Proposals, is a comparison of the House and Senate proposals and was prepared by Health Policy Alternatives, Inc. for The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

The outline of the two bills includes a comparison of premiums, deductibles and cost-sharing, the role of private health plans, payments to drug plan sponsors, and treatment of retiree health drug coverage. The side-by-side report is available online at http://www.kff.org/content/2003/6095."

Fate of Qualified Individual 1 Program Remains Uncertain

"The QI-1 Program, which pays the Medicare Part B premium (\$58.70 per month in 2003) for low income Medicare beneficiaries, was originally scheduled to expire on December 31, 2002. However, Congress extended the QI-1 Program until September 30, 2003.

While an extension of the QI-1 Program for five years is contained in the Senate version of the Medicare prescription drug bill, S.-1, the House version of the Medicare drug bill, H.R.-1 does not contain an extension.

The QI-1 Program will once again be in jeopardy if Congress fails to reconcile and pass a Medicare drug bill that the President signs into law by mid-September 2003.

A bill was introduced in the Senate by Senator Jeff Bingaman, (D., N.M.), S. 1519, to extend the QI-1 Program through December 31, 2004." We will keep you informed about QI-1 developments.

MSP Outreach Events in Acadiana

By Kathy Reed



Above: **Christina Gerard** of Acadia Parish Medicaid explaining MSP Program to one of the attendees of the Acadia Parish Food for Families event

Employee Benefit Fair at LSU-E in Eunice

Evangeline Parish Medicaid along with Acadia Parish Medicaid teamed up to do a MSP and LaCHIP event at LSU-E on April 9, 2003.

Acadia Parish Medicaid Partners with Acadia Parish Council on Aging

Acadia Parish attended an MSP outreach event in conjunction with a very important partner, the Acadia Parish Council on Aging. With the aid of Ms. Vernice Angel and Ms. Doris Faulk, our staff was able to distribute 400 applications to a worthy population on April 29, 2003.



Delores Johnson of Acadia Parish setting up the MSP outreach table at **LSU-E** in Eunice.

Social Security Administration "Reaches Out" to Potential MSP Eligibles

The Social Security Administration (SSA) began a massive outreach project in May 2002 to provide information to individuals who received Social Security benefits and were potentially eligible for the Medicare Savings Program. Letters were mailed to 260,137 potential QMB/SLMB/QI eligibles in Louisiana from May 10 through November 8, 2002.

In 2003, an estimated 68,390 letters are being sent to individuals and couples in Louisiana who receive Social Security benefits and appear to meet the income limits for the Medicare Savings Program based on SSA records. This income-tested mailing will include beneficiaries who are newly entitled to Medicare, beneficiaries whose circumstances have changed (e.g. recent widow (ers) and approximately one fifth of the beneficiaries who received a letter in 2002. The 2003 mailing began in June and will end in October 2003.





Louisiana Medicaid's Medicare Savings Program

Call us **Toll-Free** at 1+888+544+7996:

- ► For answers to your Medicare Savings Program questions.
- For Medicare Savings Program enrollment forms.
- To schedule a MSP presentation.
- To become a "MSP Partner" and help Louisianians on Medicare save over \$700 per year.